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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-IRAN, U.S.-SYRIA, DUBAI-MOSSAD,
UKRAINE, U.S.-NUCLEAR ENERGY, EU-GREECE;BERLIN

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- [1](#). Lead Stories Summary

Print media carried a variety of lead stories this morning. While Sueddeutsche Zeitung centered on the upcoming strike of Lufthansa pilots, FAZ led with a report on the traditional Ash Wednesday speeches by political party leaders. Berliner Zeitung and Tagesspiegel led with reports on poverty in Germany, and Die Welt with an opinion poll on the reputation of politicians. Editorials focused on the upcoming strike of Lufthansa pilots and the Ash Wednesday speeches of leading German politicians. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau also led with reports on the Ash Wednesday speeches by Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Westerwelle.

- [2](#). (U.S.-China) Relations, Dalai Lama

Weekly Die Zeit (2/18) carried a full-page report on U.S.-Chinese relations under the headline: "Rivalry - To the Extreme?" and wrote: "Unlike the Soviet Union, China has built its rise not on its military but on its economic power. That is why the United States and China live in a kind of symbiotic relationship that history has never seen before: exporter and importer, creditor and debtor, and that is why both sides would lose in a conflict. Nevertheless, there is one possible trouble spot for which detailed U.S. and Chinese war games exist: Taiwan. In Taiwan, China could see its interests threatened; or in North Korea, or in Pakistan; a U.S. act of despair out of fear of being thrown from the global throne is also thinkable. But China and the United States are nuclear powers. This makes, according to previous experience, a war between them

unlikely. Never before have two nuclear states fought full power against each other. We can also hope for this last fuse, the fear of the last great disaster, in U.S.-Chinese relations. But all possible rivalries give each conflict and each crisis between those two powers a dangerous undertone."

Under the headline: "A Special Relationship, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (2/18) argued on its front page: "Following his visit to China, the U.S. President realized that [U.S.-Chinese] relations must change but not in China's interest: Obama's gestures of friendliness and Obama doing without any appeals to respect human rights has been interpreted by the Chinese as a sign of weakness. The leadership in Beijing did not see any reason to change its extreme policies. Obama did not get anything in return for his advances but he was also humiliated. That is one more reason why he came to the conclusion to receive the Dalai Lama. The U.S. government has now finally left the phase of idealism towards China. According to Henry Kissinger, U.S.-Chinese relations are the most important ones in the 21st century. The old superpower is meeting the new emerging major power. No one can be interested in this meeting turning into a clash. But it is naive to cheer at China's rise and link it solely to the hope that China will now assume greater international responsibility. China's relationship with the United States is complex and will remain complex: cooperation here, a divergence of interests, rivalry, even confrontation there. If China demands respect, then this is also true vice versa. Obama should receive the Dalai Lama - not to provoke China but because it is an expression of his own convictions."

Under the headline: "Transpacific Expert - Barack Obama's Policy is
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a Mixture of Standstill and Progress," Tagesspiegel (2/18) argued: "President Obama does not dodge the conflict with China. Taiwan will receive military hardware worth 6.4 billion dollars. He supports Google's threat to withdraw from China if Beijing does not stop its censorship efforts. At the same time, he is seeking Beijing's support for sanctions against Iran and in the nuclear talks with North Korea. The White House is also watching the talks between China and the envoys of the Dalai Lama about Tibet's future. And it is by no means clear whether Obama's policy towards China is the expression of a lasting shift of power, or whether we owe it to the current global situation and U.S. policy in general will become more self confident again as soon as it has overcome the financial and economic crisis and no longer feels internationally dependent."

13. (U.S.-Syria) Washington Sends New Ambassador

Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/18) editorialized: "Despite Special Envoy Mitchell's diligent efforts, nothing is moving forward between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It might therefore be more promising to go to Syria after five years of diplomatic silence between Washington and Syria. Washington is about to send Robert Stephen Ford as Ambassador to the Syrian capital. Undersecretary Burns' recent talks with President Assad made clear that both sides want to resume their relations, which were broken up under George W. Bush. Syria is playing a key role in the Mideast process and in Lebanon. Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri approves of America's rapprochement with Damascus, although Syrians probably masterminded the assassination of his father Rafik. Syria, as a strategic (not ideological) ally of Iran might also be helpful in the conflict over Islamic Republic's nuclear armament.

Sddeutsche (2/18) headlined: "U.S. sends Ambassador to Syrian again," and reported: "This step had been in the air since the middle of last year.... For President Obama, Ford's appointment is another step towards rapprochement with the former enemy. His predecessor George W. Bush recalled Ambassador Scobey in February 2005 to protest against Syria's alleged involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese PM Hariri. In addition, Bush wanted to exert pressure on Damascus to get Syria to renounce its connections with Iran and the Shiite Hezbollah militia. This policy has failed. Obama showed great determination when he extended the sanctions against Damascus in May 2009. However, he has now pursued a symbolic change - and quickly met with criticism. Given that his efforts to reach to Iran and to resume Israeli-Palestinian peace

talks have been unsuccessful, Republicans now see the opportunity to accuse him of failure in the region."

Tagesspiegel's (2/18) intro noted: "President Obama wants to overcome the political ice age in relations with Syria and appointed career diplomat Robert Ford as new ambassador to Damascus.... The German government said it is pleased with the prospect of a diplomatic rapprochement between Washington and Damascus."

14. (Dubai) Killing Of Hamas Arms Dealer

Under the headline: "The Handwriting of Mossad," Tagesspiegel (2/18) reported: "Apart from the hard facts, a maze of rumors, mysteries and suspicions of the origin the attack and the real identities of the assailants is going rampant. The professionalism of the attack has focused suspicion among international experts...on Mossad. Of course, Jerusalem is silent about the suspicions, but Israeli media in their majority tend to make Mossad responsible for the killing of Mahmud al-Mabhuh, one of the most important commanders of the military wing of the radical Hamas movement.... German security agencies also consider it likely that Mossad was responsible for the attack, but unnamed sources said that there is no certainty because Israel has thus far not answered German requests. But it is clear that the Americans would have nothing to do with the operation,

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these sources said. They added that it is very likely that Mossad planned the operation on its own and that at best 'subordinated logistical support from another intelligence service,' for instance, from Jordan would be thinkable.... In the case of the alleged perpetrator with a German passport, the man is in reality an orthodox American Jew...who attends a religious school in a suburb of Tel Aviv."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/18) noted under the headline: "Odd Careers As Agent," that: "There are growing concerns that Israel's reputation could now be damaged as a consequence of the use of passports from friendly nations. Similar developments happened in the past and burdened Israel's relations with states such as Canada and New Zealand." Die Welt (2/18) carried a similar report, headlined: "All Trails Lead to Israel."

In an editorial Die Welt (2/18) judged under the headline; "Mossad's Trail," that "when somewhere in the world, an arch enemy of the Jewish state falls victim to an assassination attempt, Israeli politicians are silent.... That is why it is all the more surprising that Foreign Minister Liebermann said that it would be unfair to make Israel responsible for the killing of Mahmoud al-Mabhuh; former Mossad agents gave assurances that the Israeli intelligence service would never do such a botched-up job and that a foreign intelligence service wanted to make Israel responsible. But apart from the fact that Mossad carried out some past operations in a botched-up way, it cannot be ruled out that Mossad is responsible. Nevertheless, one reason for the sudden denial seems to be that too many trails lead to Israel. It is one matter to eliminate a dangerous terrorist, but it is a different matter to use falsified passports of friendly nations, thus jeopardizing diplomatic contacts."

Berliner Zeitung (2/18) commented: "Mossad is in the news, which would be very difficult for any intelligence service. If the Israeli Mossad indeed killed the senior Hamas official by a hit squad in Dubai, it will face outrage at home and abroad. Anyway, the incident in Dubai would not be the first state-run assassination Mossad has pursued against militant Palestinians. Mossad has killed many times before and without any respect for state borders. Let there be no doubt: some of those killed had the blood of Israelis in their hands. However, like any other country, Israel must respect international rules. Suspects must be taken to court and sentenced before they can be punished. Mossad apparently did not just work in Dubai but was allegedly involved in a mysterious incident in Syria, where a bus with Iranian officials and Hamas members exploded. There was also speculation that Mossad was involved in an attack on Hezbollah and Hamas in southern Lebanon. Hamas and Hezbollah are seen as allies of Iran. Experts therefore assume that Israel is already fighting a small war against Tehran by killing officials of

organizations that are linked to Iran."

15. (Ukraine) Aftermath of Elections

"Deferment in Kiev," was the headline of an editorial in Sueddeutsche Zeitung (2/18) which opined: "At first inspection, the decision by Ukraine's supreme administrative court means a success for Prime Minister Tymochenko...but at second inspection, it is a mere formality. That is why it is very likely that Yanukovich will take over his office as soon as the judges rule that the irregularities were not decisive for the elections. It is not very audacious to assume that Tymochenko's fight against the recognition of the election results will not likely succeed. For her, it would not be tragic because it is currently everything but a pleasure to take over Ukraine's highest position. With a 15-percent decline in economic output, Ukraine is the European country worst hit by the financial crisis."

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16. (U.S.) New Nuclear Power Plants

German media have been reporting for days on President Obama's plans to build nuclear power plants to develop green energy. Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/18) headlined a report: "America is planning a nuclear renaissance" and highlighted: "Obama wants to allow the building of nuclear plants again. They are supposed to make American energy supplies greener." Die Welt (2/15) opined: "President Obama's government guarantees to resolve the energy question can be called pragmatism or a deal with the devil. He believes he does not have a choice." die tageszeitung (2/18) editorialized: "Even if the U.S. starts to build new plants, it would not mean that market economies are about to see a nuclear boom... To make nuclear plants profitable, the kilowatt hour would have to be sold for eight cents. For this price, wind turbines and solar plants will be able to produce energy. Nuclear energy might be shortly reanimated by being on the government's drip."

Sddeutsche (2/18) editorialized: "Has he broken a taboo? Speaking to unionists, Obama announced government guarantees for building a nuclear plant in Georgia.... It would be the first new nuclear plant in the U.S. after the moratorium 30 years ago.... Is the U.S. now starting a renaissance of nuclear power? Will this lead to a new victory of nuclear energy around the globe? Nobody should now be too agitated over America's apparent folly because this is only about the building of one plant.... Twenty-eight plants are registered as new projects; half of them are behind schedule and are confronting an explosion of costs. There are only 13 applications for construction permits. This is far below the rate that would be necessary to keep America's nuclear energy at a level of 20 percent... The U.S. is therefore far away from a renaissance of nuclear energy.... Obama has never experienced the anti-nuclear energy movement like many left-wing politicians of his generation in Europe. He believes the emission-free production of energy by nuclear plants is a possible way to lower U.S. carbon dioxide emissions. He believes the risks are manageable. Like many of Obama's decisions, his engagement in favor of nuclear energy is domestic reasons. For years, Republicans have advocated a return to nuclear energy... By reaching out to them on nuclear energy, the President hopes they will make concessions on his climate protection bill. However, this will not work. Like in the health reform, Obama has been hesitating for too long.... There will be no climate protection law with a European model of trading emissions in the U.S. However, there might be more nuclear plants in ten years time."

17. (EU-Greece) Euro

Under the headline: "Greek Tragedy," weekly Die Zeit (2/18) had this to say: "The Greek debt crisis is more than an economic policy accident. What we are witnessing right now goes beyond mere crisis management. Basically all governments of the euro zone, including the German, are faced with a similar challenge to rescuing the banks in the fall of 2008. Those who want to save Greece now and prevent the next state bankruptcy must change the basic rules of the Monetary Union. Europe is forced to re-invent itself. In the long

run, a monetary union can only function if its members pursue a policy of cooperation. A Monetary Union requires competition for the best industrial sites but also a closely coordinated spending, tax and labor market policy. Those who give such different countries as Greece, Germany, Portugal and France a common currency, should not set up political barriers between them. And this is the economic decision before all euro-zone governments right now: they either sacrifice part of their national policies to keep the euro, or they sacrifice the euro and reduce the currency zone to the five or six nations which are economically similar. The first would be painful, the latter a disaster. The 27 countries talked for seven years before the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, but the 16 euro

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countries will not have so much time to adopt new rules. It is likely that they won't even have seven months."

Regional daily Die Tagespost of Wrzburg (2/18) had this to say: "Despite the understanding of the decade-long mismanagement and the cheating of the Greeks coming to an end now, the things the EU finance ministers under the leadership of Jean-Claude Juncker are now presenting are strikingly reminding us of the crook who wants to distract attention from his own offenses by loudly calling 'stop the thief.' In the ten years since the introduction of the euro, Greece has never abided by the criteria of the Stability Pact, and the EU has never done a single thing about it. Why not? And why now of all times?"

Handelsblatt (2/18) dealt with the possible accession of a few eastern European states to the euro-zone and argued: "The accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Bulgaria to the euro zone would strengthen the uniform European currency. In the meantime, even German government officials consider the neighbors in the East less a risk for the euro because they would strengthen the market economy forces in the euro zone--which is becoming increasingly significant. These countries in the East have directed their economic policies much more to economic growth and budgetary discipline than Europe's southern states. It must be a basic condition that any new countries fully meet the euro criteria. But one thing is also clear: the potential euro countries should not pay the fine for Greek or Spanish sins."

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